



RAW RESULTS OF PHASE ONE PUBLIC INPUT (SWOT) MEETING

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INTRODUCTION

On January 31, 2013 at 6:00 PM, the City of Kingston Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee held a meeting for the purpose of collecting background data, views and opinions from community residents and stakeholders. Given that this was the first public meeting at the outset of the Comprehensive Planning Process, the purpose of this meeting was to identify public and stakeholder sentiment regarding existing conditions within the City.

To accomplish this, Shuster-Turner - the Comprehensive Plan consultants coordinated with the City Planning Office and a subcommittee of the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee to design a meeting that would consist of numerous break-out groups.

This meeting was well-attended by roughly 80 to 100 members of the public and local media. The meeting began with introductions and a welcome by the Chairman of the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee - James Noble who also serves as President of the City Common Council. This was followed by a message of support from Mayor Shayne Gallo. Planning Director Suzanne Cahill followed with a short description of what a Comprehensive Plan was and why the City was undertaking its update. Stuart Turner, FAICP explained what the purpose of the public meeting was. Dan Shuster, FAICP introduced the process that the consultant team had undertaken thus far. Max Stach, AICP explained the procedure that the meeting would follow.

METHOD

Prior to the meeting, a number of tables with benches had been set up around the council chambers. As attendees entered the council chambers for the meeting, they chose places at twelve different tables. It was explained, that attendees that arrived together as part of an interest group might want to spread among groups to have their perspectives represented amongst multiple groups, but few if any people changed their groups.



Break-out Group - January 31, 2013

One or two members of the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee were assigned to each group as facilitators. In some groups these facilitators were assisted by members of the consulting team. These facilitators started by introducing themselves and having the members of the group introduce themselves and record their names and contact information on a sign-in sheet. Ground rules for respectful conduct were given and enforced. In order to avoid groups from being "steered" by members of the Comprehensive Plan Committee, facilitators were asked not to contribute their own opinions to the group discussion.

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One of the groups had two Spanish speaking facilitators. Meeting announcement flyers were posted in Spanish as well as English in order to engage the Spanish speaking population. Those attendees whose first language was Spanish and who felt more comfortable communicating in Spanish chose this group.

The facilitators then led their group through the SWOT exercise. This exercise has facilitators prompting group discussion on the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats present or confronting the City. It was clarified that a strength was an existing positive quality of the City, while an opportunity was a circumstance that was not present in the City yet but could be pursued. Likewise a weakness was an existing negative quality of the City, while a threat was a circumstance that was not present in the City yet but could develop in the future. Groups were given approximately five minutes for introductions and ten minutes each for strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. Time periods were not strictly enforced. With some groups proceeding more slowly than others, an additional five minutes was added at the end of the process to allow groups to finish.

Following the SWOT exercise, facilitators asked their groups to then pick the top three responses in each category. Each group was allowed to use whatever method they felt appropriate to agree on these top three responses. Some groups simply voted with a show of hands, some had each member pick their top three, while others had consensus discussions.

Following the group voting, City staff, Committee members and the consultant team worked as quickly as possible to compile the top three responses from each group. While this list was being compiled and groups wanting more time were wrapping up the exercise, the Consultant team distributed six red adhesive dots to each attendee. Attendees were informed that they would use the dots to vote on items on the master list. It is noted, that compiling SWOT qualities and wrapping up of various groups took approximately 20 minutes, during which several members of the public decided to leave instead of waiting to vote or network.

Once the master list was compiled, participants were asked to vote on the compiled master list of top responses by placing up to six red adhesive dots next to the responses they felt were most important on the master list. Each person had to decide how to allocate each dot among the various responses in the four categories. Attendees were allowed to use all six dots in one category or on one item, or to place single or multiple dots among the various responses in different categories however they wished. Because there was only one Master List and only a few persons could vote at a time, this was done during an informal discussion period where several groups continued to talk amongst themselves. This also allowed opportunities for attendants to engage members of the steering committee one-on-one informally.

While this voting was taking place, and in light of the number of people that had left already or were still waiting to vote, the consultant team announced the close of the meeting, and announced the availability of an online survey on the City website. A suggestion box on the website was also advertised for those that wished to provide more input. It was announced that the results of the SWOT meeting would be posted once they were compiled.

Lastly, James Noble thanked all attendees for coming and closed the meeting.

It is noted that the responses set forth below are paraphrased notes of more robust discussions held at the meeting. Since the Steering Committee members and consultant team were directly involved as facilitators, these discussions will be reflected by the continuing involvement of the group facilitators as Steering Committee members.

RESULTS – TOP RESPONSES

The following lists were compiled from the top three responses in each category identified by each group. Similar responses were combined. The entire group then cast its votes using the red adhesive dots. The number beside each comment denotes how many votes were received by that comment.



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NOTE: These are the raw results from the exercise and no analysis of results is offered at this time.

Strengths

- Historical and Cultural Heritage 11
- Location / Proximity to Hudson River and Catskills 8
- Waterfront 8
- Racial Economic Diversity 6
- Natural Environment and Beauty 3
- Parks and Recreation Opportunities 3
- Housing stock and built environment 3
- Low Population Density 2
- Increase in Hispanic businesses
- Restoration of Wall Street
- Good Community Groups
- Restaurants
- Sense of Community

Weaknesses

- Transportation infrastructure/ Bike lanes / sidewalks / traffic lights and buses 19
- No Spanish speaking police and teachers 16
- Lack of employment opportunities and quality jobs 14
- Lack of opportunities for representation for Spanish population 9
- High Real Estate Taxes effects affordability 8
- Aging infrastructure 6
- Lack of higher education 5
- Lack of cross river transportation 4
- Vacancies in Midtown 4

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- Safety/ crime in midtown 3
- Development in flood prone areas 3
- No soccer field 2
- Lack of political vision 2
- Zoning too rigid 2
- Negative perception of safety and education 2
- Decline of building stock
- Lack of unified vision/ focus for public space
- Commercial draw to Ulster
- Difficult access

Opportunities

- Beautify Broadway Corridor 13
- Bike lanes/ rail trails/ green space 12
- Better mobility / walkability 8
- Desire from Latino Community to improve economy 8
- Make it easy for new business start up 7
- Integrate Latino Community with larger community 7
- Redevelopment of existing vacant industrial buildings 5
- Preserve historic character of neighborhoods (uptown) 5
- Tax incentives for historic preservation 5
- Attract young people 4
- Cultural and Eco Tourism 3
- Develop vision 2
- Increase revenue 2
- Better use of nearby colleges 2
- Kingston Point / Laughran Park soccer field
- Seasonal Events
- Better high speed internet service
- Sustainable building practices
- Consolidation of services (City /town and County)
- Marketing commercial buildings
- Reuse of culturally significant buildings

Threats

- Aging Infrastructure 12
- Racial profiling by society and police 8
- Climate change 8
- Emphasis on auto travel/ auto-centric uses 7
- Economic Decline 5
- No job opportunities for new residents 5
- Flooding 4
- Crime / safety 3
- Future development not consistent with comp plan 3

- Gentrification / too upscale 3
- Obesity and cost of healthcare 3
- Rising taxes 2
- Lack of input from all groups within community 2
- Poor urban planning 2
- Big box retail 2
- Lack of places for children to play
- Lack of appreciation for aesthetics
- Losing critical services
- Large low income buildings in Midtown
- Low income housing



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RESULTS – FULL LIST OF RESPONSES

Following are all comments posted by category from each group. Where a particular response was given by multiple groups the number of groups with that response is listed next to the comment.

Strengths

- Historic assets / heritage / architecture 12
- Arts / music / cultural opportunities 8
- Diversity 8
- Parks and Recreation 8
- Waterfront / Natural Scenic Beauty / Environmental Assets/ Geography 7
- Location / proximity to NYC / River and Catskills 6
- Shopping and Dining Opportunities 6
- Community Events / Festivals 5
- Affordability 4
- Sense of family / Community 4
- Community Groups and clubs 4
- Farmers market 4
- Education System 3
- UPAC 3
- Walkability 3
- Stockade District 3
- Neighborhoods 2
- Manufacturing infrastructure 2
- Housing stock 2
- Quality Community Services / Police 2
- Fairly Safe 2
- Mall in the Town of Ulster
- Increase in Hispanic businesses
- Museums
- Access to transportation
- Forest Areas

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- Recycling program
- Relatively low population density
- Lack of sprawl
- Agricultural resources
- Social Services
- Medical facilities
- Proximity to Airports
- Minimal Traffic congestion
- Large public sports complex
- Uniqueness of City
- County Seat
- Broadway improved sidewalks

Weaknesses

- Lack of bike lanes/ sidewalks / crosswalks / walkability 8
- Deteriorating / old infrastructure / sewer & water systems antiquated/at capacity / failing 6
- High taxes 6
- Lack of jobs / no major employers 7
- Older Buildings/ buildings in disrepair on Broadway 6
- Lack of public transportation / local bus routes 6
- Crime / drugs / prostitution / safety concerns 4
- Confusing or bad road system and signage 4
- Lack of entertainment uses /movie theater 3
- Abandoned or vacant buildings 5
- Lack of vision / political vision 4
- Need to better identify or bring attention to historic resources / need better marketing of resources 4
- Bad appearance at gateways / lack of gateways 2
- Need to improve streetscape / increase street trees 3
- Lack of marketing for vacant commercial properties 2
- Laws not being enforced 2
- Lack of inexpensive recreation for children 2
- Loss of commercial base / Commercial draw into Ulster 2
- Lack of City-wide sense of community / cohesiveness 2
- Deteriorating housing stock (midtown) 2
- Poor public perception / negative media attention 2
- Lack of high speed internet 2
- Parks underutilized and poorly maintained 2
- Lack of higher education 2
- Graffiti and litter / more trash cans needed 2
- Lack of incentives for business start up 2
- Loss of industry/ manufacturing 2
- Cost of living 2
- Lack of affordable housing 2
- Lack of neighborhood parks 2
- High crime in the area bound by Broadway, Greenkill, Clinton, Franklin
- Lack of Government Representation of Latino Community
- Zoning overly restrictive / does not encourage creative uses
- Lack of medical facilities

- Difficult to access City
- Poorly maintained parking lots
- School district too large
- Lack of Spanish language printed government information
- Lack of public events
- Lack of public soccer field
- Lack of understanding of housing and commercial stock that exists
- Lack of Spanish speaking Police that the Latino community trusts
- High failure rate of local businesses
- Development in flood prone areas
- Lack of well defined City center
- Lack of small grocery store and shopping in Rondout
- Snow plowing
- Children are offered drugs at some parks in Kingston
- Lack of government and business interaction
- Heritage Area is too small
- Too many properties off the tax roles
- Low rate of home ownership
- Lack of trained workforce
- Development opportunities unrealized



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Opportunities

- Rail Trails / Bike Routes 10
- Re-use vacant properties/ old buildings 7
- Cultural / Eco Tourism 5
- Seasonal events/ festivals/ concerts 6
- Need better mobility/ sidewalks and connectivity within City 5
- Encourage entrepreneurs / business start up 5
- Community gardens / urban farming 5
- More or Redevelopment of Uptown Area with housing / retail and entertainment uses 3
- Hotel in Rondout 2
- Public / private partnerships / partner with local colleges 3
- Historic preservation tax incentives 2
- Attract new residents / attract young creative class 3
- Sustainable building techniques 2
- Increase community and community group involvement 2
- Beautify Broadway Corridor 2
- Housing along the River 2
- Consolidation of Services (city/ town/ county) 2
- Better marketing of commercial properties 2
- The Hispanic/Latino community's desire to integrate with larger community
- Promenade extension
- Preserve historic character
- Engaging youth
- Hispanic/Latino businesses could promote economic development

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- Trolley service
- Better digital presence
- Increase revenue / build tax base
- Encourage volunteering
- Provide spanish language outdoor movies
- Housing for artists
- Clarify system of signage (road signs and POI signs)
- Bring in movie theater / arts uses
- Provide guidance in Spanish for businesses wishing to locate in Kingston
- Grocery store
- Focus on “central spine”
- Develop vision
- Contest for the “greenest” block
- High tech industry
- Taller buildings
- Hazard preparedness
- Take advantage of arts & entertainment industry in the area
- Kingston Plaza

Threats

- Aging or decaying infrastructure (sewers and sidewalks most mentioned) 8
- Crime 5
- Youth flight 4
- Rising real estate taxes / loss of tax base 4
- Loss of historic assets / historic identity or character 4
- Climate change 2
- vulnerability to flooding 4
- Need input / idea exchange among groups within Community / input lacks diversity 3
- Poor planning / lack of vision 3
- Negative press coverage 2
- Economic decline 2
- Unemployment / lack of good jobs 2
- Unbalance of owner occupied vs rental properties. 2
- Lack of community pride 2
- Losing critical services / hospital 2
- Confusing traffic patterns/ corridors interrupt walkability 2
- Apathy / Loss of hope 2
- Lack of youth activities 2
- Deteriorating Park facilities
- More midtown affordable housing could deteriorate area further
- City perceived as anti-development
- Social isolation
- Racial profiling could threaten economic development by quality Hispanic/Latino businesses
- Sewer system at capacity / overflows
- Low income housing
- Bad landlords
- Loss of wetland areas at Kingston Point
- Gentrification
- Future development not high quality / consistent with plan

- Lack of sustainable development
- Not supporting small / local business
- Lack of job opportunities for young professionals
- Planning for / over-focus on auto-centric uses and car travel
- School closings
- Big box retailers
- School safety
- Dilapidated housing stock
- Mall
- Closing businesses / vacancies
- Group homes/ not for profits
- Political infighting
- Obesity / cost of health care
- Climate change
- Lack of code enforcement
- Tappan Zee Bridge costs
- Rising costs
- Lack of state funding
- Potential bankruptcy of the City
- Need plan to develop tree population



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